

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: **Baesu, Barnes, Eklund, Gorman, Leiter, Lewis, Pierobon, Reimer, Shrader, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas**

Absent: **Gruverman**

Date: **Tuesday, December 9, 2025**

Location: **203 Alexander Building**

Note: **These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the Executive Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.**

1.0 Call (*Shrader*)

Shrader called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

2.0 Staff Senate Proposed Bullying Policy (Staff Senate President Jessie Brophy, Staff Senator Ian Edgington)

Brophy reported that the Staff Senate had a subcommittee working to draft a bullying policy and they would like to get Faculty Senate support for it. She stated that support is also being sought from ASUN, GSA, and the Chancellor's Commission chairs.

Edgington stated that the subcommittee was formed three years ago with the focus on how bullying affects staff members, but the goal was to craft a policy that would encompass everyone. Brophy stated that campus experts on bullying, Professor Susan Swearer and AVC Marc Pearce, were consulted while the policy was being drafted.

Brophy pointed out that the one question that needs to be resolved is which office should oversee the implementation of the policy, would it be Human Resources or the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance. She noted that there is some reluctance to have it reside with Human Resources and she and Edgington plan on meeting with AVC Pearce again to discuss the policy further. She stated that the staff would like to have a Staff Ombuds person but given the financial constraints the university is facing, it is unlikely to happen at this time.

Leiter pointed out that the university's harassment policy includes statements about bullying and he questioned why there is a need for two policies. He noted that there is some extremely subjective language in the proposed bullying policy, and he feels that it could be difficult to enforce. Edgington pointed out that bullying exists in gray areas and how people perceive it could be different from person to person. He pointed out that bullying boils down to a retention issue and the policy aims to educate the campus community about what constitutes bullying. Leiter stated that the university's discrimination policy mentions bullying as one of the things that would raise to the level of harassment. Edgington noted that AVC Pearce initially didn't think the IEC office should be involved, but after considering the policy further, he now thinks the office

should be involved. Edgington pointed out that the IEC has a structure in place to handle all matters that involve any form of discrimination and/or harassment.

Edgington stated that the chairs of the Chancellor's Commission would like to see an office of compliance at the system level, in part because they feel that people do not take the Bridge harassment training seriously. He pointed out that managers do not often know what they should do if an employee they supervise complains that they are being bullied. Brophy noted that Title IX protects sexual harassment, but bullying is broader and is often not sexually related. She stated that there are some specific definitions of bullying that can help identify when it is occurring. Gorman noted that an ongoing pattern of verbal abuse would constitute bullying. Vakilzadian pointed out that physical assault should not be addressed in the policy because that is a matter for the UNL Police.

Gorman stated that he has concerns with how the policy was written and it should not have anything to do with classroom behavior because policies already exist to address this and there is a bureaucratic process available to students to address bullying or harassing behavior in the classroom. He stated that the policy as written interferes with academic freedom. VanderPlas noted an incident occurred of a student being bullied by an instructor in the Statistics department. She stated that it would be good to have a different avenue for students to make a complaint rather than just going to the chair. Tschetter pointed out that some chairs do not want to deal with incidents like this and agreed that having a different avenue to address these problems would be good.

Gorman stated that the policy makes sense for the staff because of faculty-staff work dynamics. Lewis pointed out that bullying is part of an ongoing pattern in the workplace, but a burden of proof to identify the pattern would be needed to make a formal complaint. She felt that the policy would be fine and that it makes sense to have it non-gender specific.

Shrader stated that it will be important to know what office would be responsible for enforcing the policy. Edgington agreed that these questions need to be addressed.

Lewis pointed out that many Academic Rights and Responsibilities grievances could have been avoided if chairs were educated on university policies. She noted that professional development needs to occur. Edgington asked who onboards chairs. Griffin stated that the EVC office offers a DEO leadership series which provides chairs and department heads with useful information as well as connecting them to the community of department leaders across the campus.

Edgington reported that he will be meeting AVC Pearce in February to talk further about the proposed bullying policy and noted that he would raise the concerns of the Senate Executive Committee.

Leiter noted that some of the examples of bullying in the definition section of the policy could be dealt with legally. Brophy pointed out that about 30% of the staff members are

compensated below a livable wage so trying to pursue bullying in a legal manner would not be possible for them.

Shrader asked where the teeth would be in this policy and who would have the last say on a complaint of bullying. Edgington stated that it is not totally clear what the university can do right now to address the problem. Leiter stated that if someone is bullying someone else it can affect the department's ability to function properly. He stated that there is a process through Human Resources that could be used and if the behavior doesn't change, the university could fire the person.

Edginton stated that he appreciated all of the comments and the Senate's support in principle of the document. He noted that it would be better to have the faculty and staff have a say in this rather than the policy coming down from the upper administration.

Shrader suggested that after their meeting with AVC Pearce that Edginton forward the policy if there are any changes to it and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee would be happy to look at it again.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Message from Interim VC Heng-Moss

Shrader reported that he received a message Sunday morning at 6:42 asking Shrader if he could meet with her and EVC Button sometime this week to discuss the recent correspondence that Shrader shared with the Faculty Senate after the Board of Regents meeting on December 5. He noted that he will be meeting with them on December 11.

3.2 Requests for Meeting of the Academic Assembly

Shrader reported that he has received a couple of requests to call a meeting of the Academic Assembly. The Executive Committee noted that this could possibly be done in January after the semester begins but with finals next week, it is unlikely that there will be good attendance.

4.0 Approval of November 11, 2025 Minutes

Shrader asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked the Executive Committee to vote unanimously to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved.

5.0 Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Use of Electronic Voting System

Shrader thanked Gorman for writing a motion to change the Faculty Senate rules to allow the Senate to use an electronic voting system. Griffin suggested changing the word assembly to Faculty Senate which Gorman agreed to. The Executive Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion and to bring it to the full Senate for consideration in January.

6.2 Faculty Senate Syllabus Policy

Shrader noted that he received a request from Professor Hanrahan, a member of the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, to require instructors to include emergency preparedness language that adheres to the university's procedures. The Executive Committee agreed to discuss this in January.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, immediately following the Faculty Senate meeting. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Ann Tschetter, Secretary.